

Local

The House of Hodgson

OWNERSHIP FOR A CENTURY

JEFFERSONIAN, 1842 - 1908

DAILY LOCAL NEWS, 1872 - 1943

WEST CHESTER, PA.

Wise Leadership, Safe Management, Trained

News Handling, and Skilled Craftsmanship Meet Loyal Patronage

PRINTED BY D. EDWARDS BIEHN, WEST CHESTER, PA.





REV. WILLIAM HODGSON

Born in England, arrived in West Chester in young manhood in 1818, and preached in Methodist Episcopal Church here until his death.

Greeting

Speaking in behalf of Rev. William Hodgson and his wife, Anne Hodgson, our pioneer ancestors, and their descendants, it is a special pleasure and privilege to present this little book of remembrance to a few chosen friends.

It reviews the dreams, the aspirations of a worthy line translated into action and crowned by achievement in the past century, in our beloved county of Chester.

If the Daily Local News at present proves a source of information, of entertainment, and possibly a bit of inspiration to the people of this county, we feel that our forebears, in their labors and patience, have not lived in vain.

So we hand this to you gladly as an evidence of our sincerity and desire to be of service.

THE HOUSE OF HODGSON





ANNE HODGSON
Wife of Rev. William, and grandmother of
William Hall Hodgson.

Service for More Than A Century

Through the grace of Divine Providence and the tireless energy of a long line of diligent workers, guided in wisdom, the House of Hodgson has continued in successful publication for more than a full century. It has been inspired by a sense of devotion to its purpose, that of upholding high ideals in the community, encouraging the rightful and upright and endorsing all movements for the welfare of Chester county and its near neighbors.

During its early history the family published the weekly Jeffersonian, continuing this until the Daily Local News, founded in 1872, was well established

and recognized as a going enterprise.

Primary honors are due John Hodgson, a military man with the rank of major, who was elected to the House of Representatives, at Harrisburg, in 1857, as a member from Chester county, along with Elmer W. Sharpe and Morton Garrett.

Major John Hodgson was a son of Rev. William

Hodgson, a Methodist Episcopal minister, who in 1818 came to West Chester, where he was actively engaged in preaching until his death. The son was

born in the old home in England.

On page 108 of the Daily Local News Centennial Souvenir appears this paragraph in relation to the old Methodist Episcopal Church, at the northeast corner of Market and Darlington streets, now a

place of merchandise:

"Ministers from Chester circuit did most of the preaching prior to 1818, when Rev. William Hodgson, a zealous local preacher, arrived from England. On his settling in West Chester he began at once to hold regular preaching services and organized the Wednesday evening prayer meeting, which has been maintained ever since."

(Today this midweek meeting continues in this

church, but it has been dropped in some.)

Rev. and Mrs. William Hodgson lived on West Gay street, in what was later the home of Lewis W. Shields and family, and is now the Chester County Juvenile Home. There she kept a little candy store and also sold fresh yeast, being reputed as the first person in this borough to handle yeast commercially.

She was the first Anne Hodgson.

Her grandson, William Hall Hodgson, used to sleep in an upper room in this home when he was a boy. One night, when the famous "falling stars" were in evidence, his grandmother, known as "Auntie" Hodgson, waked him and took him out to see them.





MAJOR JOHN HODGSON

Founder of Jeffersonian and "fiery" editor of various other papers.

John Hodgson Brave Pioneer Publisher

It was a bold and brave undertaking to publish a weekly newspaper in West Chester, a hundred years ago. The town was small and the country, although well settled, was hard to reach because there were few paved roads and the horse was the main means of transportation.

True, there was a railroad to Philadelphia by way of Malvern, then called Intersection, but traffic was what in these days might be called rather light in volume.

Hence John Hodgson was a real pioneer. Various papers had been founded and failed, having but slender circulation and poor advertising patronage. Henry S. Evans, who appears to have been about the first person to make publication profitable, conducted the Village Record from 1834 until his death in 1872 and John Hodgson entered the field as his rival, making different attempts, and on September 3, 1843, he began the publication of the West Ches-

ter Herald, which continued for one short month. On October 3, 1843, this was united with the Jeffersonian, which had been suspended five months, but was resuscitated, and on its union with the Herald the publication was resumed under the title Jeffersonian and Democratic Herald, the latter name as a sub-title, and published by John Hodgson and Asher M. Wright. In this effort John Hodgson made a permanent venture which firmly established him and his family until the present day.

Mr. Wright severed his connection with the paper two years later, leaving John Hodgson in full control, the latter continuing until 1866, when he was succeeded by his son, William H. Hodgson, who in due time formed a corporation which is yet in charge.

William H. Hodgson continued the "Jeff" until the early part of the present century, when the Daily Local News, born November 19, 1872, grew so strong there was no longer any need for the weekly Jeffersonian in this field.

The publishing house of the Jeffersonian was on Market street just east of the Mansion House, only a basement being used at that time. It was removed from there to its present location on the west side of High street south of Market about the year 1860.

It is said that John Hodgson never used pen or pencil in preparing his editorials, but merely stood before his upper and lower case and picked out the type letters one by one, arranging them in his composing stick with rapidity, and when an editorial was completed he took a proof and read it with much satisfaction.

This same custom was followed by other men of his generation, and doubtless by most of the early editors, thus saving much time. Later, when the editors found other duties pressing upon them they would write or dictate their copy for the composing room.

Thus, with every reach for a letter, John Hodgson kept up a vigorous line of thought direct and to the point. In consequence the adjective "fiery" was frequently applied to him.

His motto, streaming across the top of the front page of every issue indicated somewhat the spirit of the journal:

"Be just and fear not. Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy God's, thy country's and truth's."

He was 35 years of age when he founded the "Jeff," and feared no one. His circulation rapidly increased, and while his expressed views won the admiration of many, this more often created lifelong enemies. In the heated political times of the Civil War, this result was to be expected.

Ray H. Abrams, Ph.D., who wrote a brochure upon his methods and experience, said his editorials "possessed a directness of approach that leaves the present day reader gasping for breath."

Being asked one day whether he wrote his own editorials, John Hodgson responded: "Certainly I do, and no one else. I feel myself fully capable to do so."

In 1857, when John Hodgson was elected to the State Legislature, a contemporary, Henry S. Evans.

editor of the Village Record, thus appraised his fel-

low journalist:

"Fearless of personal consequences, he has boldly espoused every party doctrine and measure, while others stood trembling, hesitating and calculating to see how the wind would blow.

"When the entire party deserted President Pierce, he remained his firm friend. . . . He has been more abused by his political opponents than any other man. We like . . . Hodgson. . . . We know where to find him."

John Hodgson owned other papers in his day. He learned his trade on the Village Record, after which he went to Doylestown, Bucks county, and worked as a compositor on the Intelligencer. Later he located in Norristown and bought the Herald, which he published for a time. During a brief period he lived in West Virginia, where he established a paper, but as this was unprofitable, he returned to Pennsylvania.

He died in Chester in 1877, shortly after estab-

lishing the Times, in that city.

Major John Hodgson married Elizabeth Hall, daughter of a prominent citizen of Bucks county. Five children blessed their union: William, Elizabeth, Anne, Charles, and John. All the boys learned the printing trade, but it remained for William to follow it successfully.

Those were the days when children were taught to work, and all the small industries were likely to be family projects, just as the farms were. Boys and girls stood on boxes and set type as soon as they were

old enough to read. In many instances this was their only university, but a good one.

Boys Early Learned to Work

William Hall Hodgson was born in Doylestown October 15, 1830, and on the day his father began publication of the Jeffersonian, he being twelve years old, entered the office to learn the printing trade, at which he became adept. That was in 1842.

When a young man, by way of gaining wider experience, he worked for a time with a large book publishing house in Philadelphia and also went west later, returning to find his "acres of diamonds" in

the home plant.

He was fond of relating that while he was setting type in the Quaker City he had a piece of manuscript copy containing several Latin sentences which he handled to perfection, leaving not an error. The proprietor commented, "You must be familiar with the Latin language. Do you know Latin?"

"No," responded the young man modestly, "but

I try to be careful in my work."

This was a secret of his success. William H. Hodg-





WILLIAM HALL HODGSON

Owner of Jeffersonian and founder of Daily Local

Owner of Jeffersonian and founder of Daily Loca News in the vigor of his young manhood.

son always insisted upon having all work neatly and accurately done.

He never attempted to hurry or worry his employes, but woe to the man who was careless or

slouching.

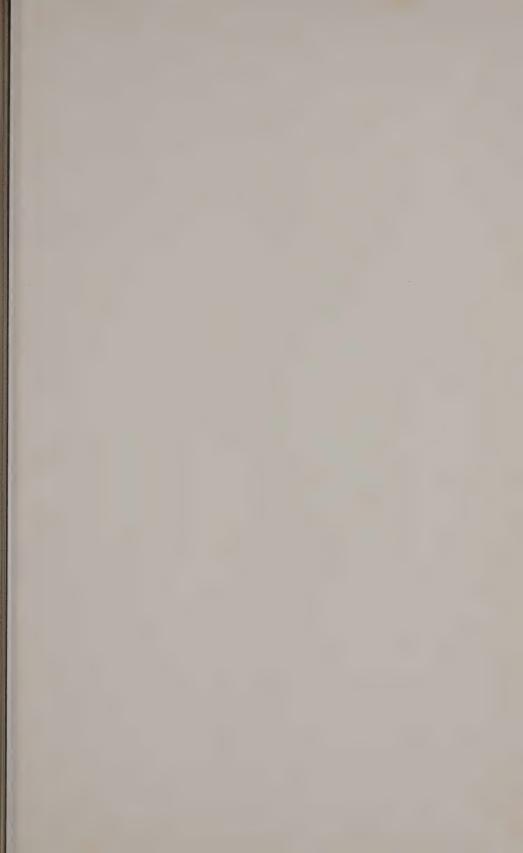
To the last of his days Mr. Hodgson was interested in the printing craft as such. When well past the usual time for retiring, he was every day in the composing room for some hours, handling type with much skill. With his slender delicate fingers he could pick up the largest handfuls of moist type from the galleys and settle them between the brass column rules in deft style, having almost never a spill, and "pi" was practically unknown to him. Strangers used to look at this performance in wonder, but he paid no attention during the act, his eyes being fixed upon the work in hand until it was completed. Then he would pause to chat with any one who might be near.

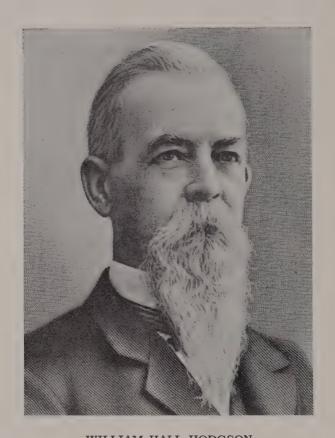
At the time of the West Chester Centennial celebration as a borough the Local News issued a souvenir book containing much historic and other data, and this work found Mr. Hodgson in his element. Although seventy years of age, the familiar threescore and ten, he spent much time in the composing room and made up every one of the well toward 300 pages. This was regarded as a wonderful achievement for a man of his years, and a beautiful piece of ornamental printing.

In those days every employe felt that at any moment the owner of the paper might be looking over his shoulder watching for the diligent workman and

not infrequently showing him some special favor in a quiet way, with instructions not to mention it.

At times of trouble in the home of one of his official family, Mr. Hodgson's sympathy was certain, with usually some substantial aid which might be long remembered.





Helped Employes Get Ahead

During his period of activity William Hall Hodgson showed much interest in the financial welfare of his men, encouraging them to save and to own their homes. He highly favored the West Chester Building and Loan Association, in which many of them held stock.

In a number of instances he presented stock to men of special industry and loyalty, and kept their dues paid for them until the shares matured. On the monthly night for payment of dues the foreman of the composing room, who was a director in the Building and Loan Association, would carry to the hall an armful of the subscription books, accompanied by a master check for the amount due. Every book was in the shareholder's name, but Mr. Hodgson saw to it personally that the dues were not permitted to lapse.

In case of illness he would always be prompt in visiting the home of the invalid and usually left some

token of his regard. All this was done in such a quiet fatherly way that no one knew it except the recipient, who was directed not to make the matter known abroad.

In the same way he would help some with their vacations or in improving their homes. Realizing full well that a loose dollar in the pocket is prone to have an effect in burning a hole there, as the Secretary of the United States Treasury is informing the people today, he encouraged the men to refrain from spending their money for that which is not bread, but to invest it wisely in order that they and their families might have full benefit.

It was said in some cases he offered insurance policies, but no instance of this was made known to the

group as a whole.

William H. Hodgson was a man of fine appearance, being medium tall, of slender, graceful build, and wearing a long, narrow, pointed white patriarchal beard, reaching half way to his waist. While the beard made him look venerable, his twinkling eye and active step gave full assurance that his heart was yet young.

Before the Civil War he belonged to the Pennsylvania State Militia, his company being commanded by Captain Apple, and in this he was noted for his soldierly bearing and his accurate marksmanship.

In a martial uniform, or in a black frock coat with a white vest, crowned by a glistening high silk hat, he presented a distinguished appearance.

For many years he was a trustee in the First Presbyterian Church, where he and his family could be

seen every Sunday morning of the year. Mrs. Hodgson had been Wilhelmina Dennison, of Philadelphia. She was a dainty little woman of much grace and intelligence, interested in varied charities, and had many warm friends.

William H. Hodgson had been thrice married, his first wife having been Alice Clayton, and the second

Sarah Rich.

The husband, while exemplary in his habits, was somewhat liberal in his views, but sensitive regarding his personality. One day, as he was leaving the church a man who had been waiting outside stepped up to him and handed him a handsome new silk umbrella, tactlessly saying, "This is yours, Mr. Hodgson, your ticket won it at the Fire Company Fair last night." While this was embarrassing at the moment, Mr. Hodgson used to laugh about it afterward as a good joke upon himself.

After the vacating by the pastor, Rev. Washington R. Laird, Ph.D., who had been made pastor emeritus and had bought a home on the south side of West Miner Street, Mr. Hodgson, as chairman of the property committee, took great pride in fitting up the manse with hardwood floors, fresh paint and paper, etc., for the new pastor, who proved to be Rev.

Samuel C. Hodge, a worthy successor.

As a member of West Chester Lodge, No. 322, Mr. Hodgson took his place with the Masonic brethren, living up to the principles taught and always showing high regard for the Order.

During this century of progress the House of Hodgson has prospered materially in addition to

making hosts of friends. It owns the original Local News building and the one next door, formerly known as the Cornwell building, used as an annex, and also the Farmers and Mechanics building at the southwest corner of High and Market streets, familiarly known as the "F. & M. building," these affording ample space for expansion.

Shunned Unwise Publicity

While William Hall Hodgson liked to appear well in public, being recognized as a man worthy of his place in the community, he shrank from any feature which savored of the spectacular or burlesque. He desired always to be calm, dignified, self-controlled. Yet it was not always easy to avoid pitfalls nor to escape those who desired to take undue advantage of him.

It so befell one autumn that a writer for a national magazine conceived the desire to exploit him as a personality, and with this in mind he came to West Chester to interview him.

Mr. Hodgson received him cordially and talked with him earnestly, about human nature, its strength and weakness, its fads and foibles, and some things he was doing or desired to do to make the world a bit brighter and better and happier.

Later Mr. Hodgson was shocked to find that he had been flaunted as a Santa Claus. The magazine

portrayed him as wearing a fur coat with ermine belt and jaunting about town on Christmas morning to the tune of sleighbells, delivering plump turkeys with cranberries, celery and the equipment, to his employes and special friends.

So dismayed was he at seeing this exhibit that he sent out to all the news stands in this vicinity and bought up the entire edition of the magazine in circulation here, to prevent its being read by any of his

friends and neighbors.





WALTER DENNISON HODGSON
Only son of William Hall and Wilhelmina
Dennison Hodgson.

Final Hours Clear

After a lingering illness, Mr. Hodgson passed from this life on October 18, 1917, retaining consciousness and his faculties until practically the last.

His body was interred in his family lot in Oaklands Cemetery beside those of near relatives, following a service by his pastor and also Masonic recognition

from his lodge.

Mr. Hodgson belonged also to the Odd Fellows, Patrons of Husbandry and the West Chester (Social) Club, some of whose members were present at the service.

His final resting place, marked by a handsome monument, is midway between the cemetery chapel and the southern border line, and not far from those of Dr. William Darlington, famous botanist, and Major Isaac Barnard, of early military fame.

On the day of his death the News published an editorial several inches in length, written hastily by the editor, Wilmer Worthington Thomson, whose hand

must have trembled with emotion at his loss, for the two men had been associated daily for more than 35

years. This is a portion:

"To the general public he was unostentatious and in a measure reserved, in his custom, but to his daily associates he was the exact reverse. So it is that a friend and companion has passed to his reward, leaving behind him that which will survive him more than all else in the minds of his fellows, a love, a regard, a wholesome admiration with that sense of sorrow which comes at the parting with one whose kindly acts serve to endear him to all with whom he was brought into daily contact."

Mr. and Mrs. William H. Hodgson had one son, Walter Dennison Hodgson, who when a lad accompanied his father to Europe in the final decade of the past century, also on a visit to Bermuda. He was much interested in photography and for a time had a gallery in one of the rooms of the publication office, where he produced some excellent portraits and other views. Being fond of travel, he spent much of his time out of town, sojourning in New York State, in Florida, or at the seashore.

He married Miss Anne Griffin, of this borough, and after some years died, leaving his devoted wife and two daughters, Miss Wilhelmina Hodgson and Mrs. Ann Hodgson Black. Mrs. Hodgson and Mrs. Black are both members of the Board of Directors of the Local News Company, the latter serving as vice president.

Mrs. Black is the mother of two children, a son, John Hodgson Thomas, an aspiring youth in his

18th year, attending radio school, in Philadelphia, with prospect of one day becoming the Local News executive, and a daughter, Lois Ann Black, winsome and cherubic, aged 18 months, with a decided personality, who may become a famous feminine leader.

Founded At Institute Time

Various accounts of the starting of the Local News as the pioneer daily paper of Chester county have been given, but the facts in the case, as related by those close to its origin give it an educational slant.

The germ of the Daily Local News was the publication of a daily program in connection with the Chester County Teachers Institute, which met usually in the final week of October, in old Horticultural Hall, now Memorial Hall, on North High street. That was in the autumn of 1872.

County Superintendent Pierce was in charge of that annual assembly, and it was he who gave permission for the program to be distributed among the teachers. It was a small four-page sheet issued in the morning.

Besides the features of the institute it each morning carried several columns of local and other news. It proved a welcome visitor to the teachers as well as to all the merchants in the town, at whose places

of business it was gratuitously distributed.

So many were the expressions of regret heard at parting with this little caller, it was these remarks that led to the thought that a real daily paper might survive in West Chester. As a result of this suggestion the Daily Local News made its initial bow two weeks later, on Tuesday afternoon, November 19, 1872. The initial step was taken without the soliciting of a subscription nor of an advertisement. The first two issues were distributed gratuitously, and the third day regular carriers were put upon the streets.

There was recognition immediately, as the people showed their appreciation and one by one began to

extend financial support.

During the next few weeks there was in this county, a famous murder mystery which attracted national attention, and correspondents from metropolitan newspapers flocked here for information. Fortunately, the home staff, being familiar with conditions and names here, could present a creditable story every day, and readers in large number crowded about the publication office to procure papers and absorb the gruesome details.

All this, with current mention of the home happenings along other lines, served to place the News on its own financial feet, and after the sensation of the moment had subsided the people continued loyal in their demand and support, for the paper had become

a home necessity.

Today the Local News has a huge Hoe press which could not be replaced for \$15,000, a battery

of seven linotypes worth \$4,000 apiece for setting the type, with a stereotyping outfit, teletype and other equipment to make its outfit complete, including telephone service in every department.

There is complete news coverage through the United Press in touch with every corner of the globe. The Daily Local News Company is capitalized at

\$100,000.

The staff includes 42 executives and employes and 30 paid correspondents, the latter being in the local field.

During every season there are many groups of school children who call to see how a newspaper is made.

House of Hodgson 100 Years Old

(EDITORIAL FROM DAILY LOCAL NEWS, NOV. 19, 1943)

Few business enterprises in Chester county have been conducted under one family name and ownership for a complete century, but the House of Hodgson has continued in publication more than that time.

John Hodgson, of sterling personality, printed the weekly Jeffersonian over a hundred years ago, and his son, William H. Hodgson, a well-remembered gentleman of probity and foresight, who succeeded to its ownership, founded the Daily Local News, November 19, 1872, just 71 years ago today.

In its earliest period John Hodgson had a partner for two years, but from that time on he was in complete control, the Hodgson name alone surviving.

Today two persons, members of the family, are listed on the Board of Directors of the Daily Local News Company, Mrs. Anne Griffin Hodgson and her daugh-

ter, Mrs. Ann Hodgson Black, the latter being Vice President.

On Page 331 of Futhey & Cope's History of Chester County appears this statement, as of 1882:

"On September 5, 1843, John Hodgson commenced the publication of the West Chester Herald. It was published, however, but one month, and on October 3, 1843, was united with the Jeffersonian. The latter paper had at that time been suspended five months, but was resuscitated and on the union with the Herald, the publication was resumed under the title of the Jeffersonian and Democratic Herald the latter name as a sub-title, and published by John Hodgson and Asher M. Wright. Wright's connection with the paper ceased in February, 1845, and John Hodgson was sole proprietor from that time until 1866, when he was succeeded by his son, William H. Hodgson, who is still at the helm.

"On November 19, 1872, Mr. Hodgson commenced the publication of the Daily Local News, the first daily paper established in West Chester, which is still published. It is neutral in politics and is edited by Wilmer W. Thomson."

During the complete century the House of Hodgson as a publishing organization has retained its upright character in the transaction of business and the pursuit of its mission, and in its financial integrity, enjoying the full confidence of the community which it serves.

The Daily Local News Company owes much, indeed, to be candid, its existence, to the fact that it is "The People's Home Paper, with no Political nor Sectarian Bias." It has always made an honest and diligent effort to publish the news in verity without deviation, all in the interest of the home section, thus meeting and surmounting a variety of obstacles which lie in the path of every progressive venture.

In this it has been fully sustained by those patrons who are proud of Chester county and alive to its high-

est ideals and aspirations.

Cheery Greeting from Oldest Bank

William B. Brosius, cashier of the National Bank of Chester County and Trust Company, sends a much appreciated letter to the Daily Local News, showing that fellow feeling which "makes us wondrous kind," with this message:

"We were interested in the recent observance of your one hundredth anniversary.

"Since this bank is beginning its one hundred thirtieth year of continuous service in Chester county, we sense the pride you must feel in having served the same territory for the past century.

"We believe your paper has and is making a real contribution, editorially and in providing the news and carrying the advertising of industry and business to an ever expanding area, and in especially promoting the borough of West Chester as a shopping and industrial center.

"We congratulate you upon your accomplishments

of the past century and wish you every success in the eventful years to come."

Local News Slogan Reacts

Editor Local News:—Congratulations to you on this 100th anniversary of your paper. I have been a regular reader of the Daily Local News for only about ten years and I know you have many subscribers who have a much longer record of regular subscription to

your valuable paper.

Upon examining my thoughts as to why I should want to congratulate you on this 100th anniversary, I find this sublime reason. I was born and raised in Virginia (the solid South), and came to Pennsylvania about twenty-two years ago, residing in Bucks and Montgomery counties, and received daily papers regularly from these counties, as well as from my home county in Virginia.

I have learned that what is called right in the South may be called wrong in the North, or what may be called white in the South may be called black in Pennsylvania. This has made me rather independent

in my views.

I therefore dislike newspapers which maintain a biased editorial policy and utilize every opportunity to influence their readers to the benefit of a certain group. I have placed the Daily Local News at the top of the list of papers I receive as being free from this fault. It prints the news, it expresses views and leaves the reader to choose.

I like the policy as enunciated on the first page, left top border of each issue of the Daily Local News, and may it continue to enjoy its rich heritage.

Very truly yours,

E. P. ROSENBERGER,

Secretary-Treasurer, Norristown Production Credit Association.

Likes the Local News

(CHESTER COUNTY'S FAVORITE POET IN HIS INITIAL BOW SIX YEARS AGO)

Along about this time of year
When wintry days are fleeting
Our hometown Daily Local News
(You'll get it if you pay your dues)
Prints on the first page I peruse
Appropriate words of greeting.

I've read them often in the past
With oh's of admiration,
And wondered why the Local News
(Which some folks read but to abuse)
Reciprocates the gibes and boos
With kind felicitation.

Now I enjoy the home-town sheet!
(That's why I always buy it)
And tho my jingles fail to jell,
(And doubtless I deserve the bell)

I feel the urge to wish you well, At least I'm going to try it.

I wish you joy and Christmas cheer
And health and wealth and peace
May you be blest with fortune's smile
(And new subscriptions all the while)
And advertisements by the mile.
And may you never cease.

So when you wish your readers well,
I'll know it when you do it.
I read the Local all year through,
(I'd even sell a hen or two)
To get the dough to send to you
In order to renew it.

ADAM N. REITER.

Relic of Old Front Steps

In front of what has long been the Daily Local News building at No. 12 South High street, there were for several years previously three iron steps with the name "Jeffersonian" in grill work on their faces. Two of these steps are now at the southern side of the Biehn apartment house on South Church street and the third, presented some years ago by the late M. A. Biehn, adorns the wall of a home on Dean street.



(Photo by Freeman)

GRILLED IRON STEP

Which graced front door of Jeffersonian office for many years until replaced by white marble steps of Local News.

